CNRSW Safety Advisor

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Is Your Commute Stressing You Out?

You don't have to be an expert headshrinker to understand the stressful effects of getting up early each day, being trapped in your car or bus, and arriving home late every night. You can see the consequences of stress each day when perfectly nice people yell at each other, lean on the horn, and signal with obscene gestures.

To make your commute as tolerable as possible, take a look at your attitude and try these techniques.

1. Surrender to the commute. You can be angry, irritated, and constantly railing against the horrible traffic. Or you can accept it. An accepting attitude creates a more peaceful mind.

2. The next time you are stuck in traffic, think of it as a "rest" rather than a "wait". Take some deep breaths, keep your eyes on the road, and relax your body.

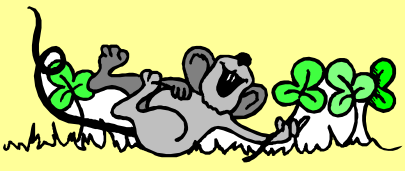
3. Have a tape or CD player in your car. Enjoy music, positive thinking tapes, or a novel being read out loud to you as you drive.

4. Give yourself extra time to commute. Tightly scheduled commuting adds to the tension.

5. Use the driving time to make plans or jot down creative ideas.

6. If you're in a carpool, ride to work with people you like.

7. Try to put a smile on your face, and even exchange a friendly word with the the sentry at the gate.



Electrical Safety

We know that, if used improperly, electricity presents safety hazards. Yet serious injuries and deaths still occur regularly because of someone's improper use of electrical equipment—perhaps operating it with wet hands or use of electrical equipment without realizing it was defective—or even foolishly taking a chance on working with equipment known to be defective. What can you do to prevent you and your co-workers from becoming victims of electrical accidents?

Make sure that the equipment you use is properly grounded; grounding drains dangerous electrical current leaks away to the earth. If an electrical device is grounded, its cord will have a three-wire plug and require a three-way receptacle to accommodate it. Grounding is especially important when the equipment is used on metal surfaces. (Equipment need not be grounded if it is double-insulated; this is usually indicated by a label.)

Avoid the use of extension cords, especially those that violate safety features by accommodating three-way plugs to two-way receptacles. If you must use extension cords, use heavy-duty ones. Check for proper grounding and exposed wires, as well as the condition of cords, plugs, and insulation. Always remove cords from receptacles by the plug; pulling cords from receptacles from across a room damages them. Be sure that cords are not pinched in doors, drawers, equipment, or anything else, as this also damages the cords. Do not allow electrical cords to be on the floor in hallways where they are walked on, or have oil or grease spilled on them; this harms electrical cords and increases the possibility of accidents.

Electricity can accomplish a variety of things and make life easier for us. It can be a threat to one's well being, however, when used by someone who does not know or apply rules for electrical safety.

Noise on the Job!

Have you ever been in an extremely loud setting and asked someone who regularly works there, "How do you put up with this noise?" The shouted reply: "I've gotten used to it!" People who are exposed to loud noise for extended periods of time do become accustomed to it because of a gradual hearing loss resulting in a reduced sense of volume. Growing "accustomed" to noise is only one symptom of hearing loss. Others are ringing ears after exposure to loud noise, or the impression that other people frequently mumble as they speak. In addition to hearing loss, constant exposure to loud noise can cause high blood pressure, irritability, and other symptoms of stress.

There is a difference between sound and noise. Noise is defined as sounds we prefer not to hear—an insistent horn honking or rock music blaring from a teenager's stereo. Noises don't have to be loud to be irritating. For example, during a quiet, sleepless night, the sound of a dripping faucet can be as irritating as a diesel truck. But high-volume noise can have a dangerous impact on the inner ear's capacity for hearing. Exposure to loud noise over an extended period of time will eventually destroy a person's hearing. This fact is especially important for those of us who work daily with loud noises.

Sound is measured by decibels. A whisper is about 20 decibels, while voices in a normal conversation range from 60 to 70 decibels. A diesel truck and a power lawn mower both register at about 95 decibels, the level at which noise can damage hearing. At 117 decibels, a pneumatic drill can cause pain to unprotected ears.

Today, millions of people are exposed to hazardous noise on and off the job. In the workplace, machinery often produces noise above 85 decibels. You should wear hearing protection in any area with a noise measurement that is higher than 85 decibels. Soft, comfortable earplugs, which are compressed before insertion into the ear canal, effectively block out noise by gently expanding and conforming to the shape of the ear canal. The earplugs also prevent dirt and grease from entering the ear, and they can be worn with safety glasses, helmets, and respiratory protection. Other forms of protection such as ear muffs also block out noise effectively, but they cannot always be worn with other protective equipment.

Annual hearing tests can help determine which workers are experiencing hearing loss. By comparing test results over a period of years, serious hearing conditions can be diagnosed and treated.

The Navy has a hearing conservation program which includes periodic auditory tests for hearing deterioration. Also, the Navy provides earplugs or muffs to all employees and visitors in high noise areas. You are required to use protection when necessary to ensure that you do not suffer from hearing loss.

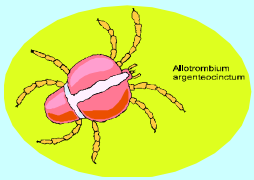
Fortunately, a noisy environment can be a safe environment as well. An appropriate hearing conservation program at home, in addition to the one we have at work, is the best insurance that optimum hearing will be maintained as long as possible.

Protect Your Eyes

Des Plaines, Ill - To prevent debilitating injuries to your eyes, the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) has issued a reminder to wear eye protection at home and at work. Whether you are at work, at home, in the garage or on the lawn, an object can fly into your eye and not only threaten your vision, but also cause greater damage. However, a simple prevention step such as putting on protective eyewear such as goggles can prevent possible blindness or a debilitating injury.

According to the National Society to Prevent Blindness, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving sight, more than 1,000 eye injuries of all types occur every day in the U.S., with 100,000 of them resulting in some vision loss every year. At work, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that three out of five workers who suffered an eye injury did not wear eye protection, and of those who did, 40 percent wore the wrong kind.

ASSE encourages home-repair hobbyists and do-it-yourselfers to be cautious. Workshops have hazards such as solvents, adhesives, paints, and dyes that contain harmful chemicals that can threaten your eyes. Splashes, spills and fumes can injure or irritate exposed eyes. Again, you should wear the proper eye protection. Goggles for working with solvents, adhesives, etc., full-face shields for work with grinders and equipment that result in chips and flying objects.



Lyme Disease

OSHA has published a hazard information bulletin (HIB) to provide guidance to people who reside in high or moderate risk areas in the United States and who are exposed to ticks during the course of their work and thus at risk of contracting Lyme disease. Examples of outdoor work which may be associated with increased risk of exposure to infected ticks include: construction work, landscaping, forestry, brush clearing, land surveying, farming, railroad work, oil field work, utility line work and park/wildlife management.

Lyme disease is cause by *Borrelia burgdorferi*, a bacterium carried in the gut of certain ticks. When these infected ticks attach to the human body (often in armpits, groin, scalp, or other hairy, hidden body areas), they slowly feed, and within 36-48 hours they may transmit *B. burgdorferi* to their human host.

Although a majority of people with Lyme disease develop a "bulls-eye" rash, 20-40% of persons who have the disease do not have a rash. Other signs and symptoms may be non-specific and similar to flu symptoms (e.g., fever, lymph node swelling, neck stiffness, generalized fatigue, headaches, migrating joint aches, or muscle aches).

Most cases of Lyme disease can be successfully treated with antibiotics. It is very important that Lyme disease be diagnosed and treated with antibiotics, since untreated Lyme disease may result in symptoms (i.e., arthritis, muscle pain, heart disease, brain and nerve disorders) that are severe, chronic, and disabling.

Prevention of Lyme Disease

First line of defense is decreasing the probability of tick bites. Ticks can be vectors of other infections, in addition to Lyme disease.
-Avoidance of tick habitat (brushy, overgrown grassy, and woody areas) particularly in spring and early summer when young ticks feed.
-Removal of leaves, tall grass and brush from areas around work areas or residential areas to decrease tick as well as host (deer and rodent) habitat.

Personal Protection

-Wearing light-colored clothing (to more easily see ticks).
-Wearing long-sleeved shirts, tucking pant legs into socks or boots (delays ticks from reaching skin so they can be more easily found before attaching).
-Using appropriate insect repellants on non-facial skin and permethrin on clothing (kills ticks) in accordance with EPA guidelines.
-Showering and washing/drying clothes at high temperature after outdoor exposure.
-Doing careful body check for ticks, prompt removal with tweezers and skin cleansing with antiseptic.